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FM AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0065
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1089

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHIANG MAI 000045

SIPDIS

NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/3/2019

TAGS: PREL PGOV BM TH

SUBJECT: BURMA-KNU: THAI MEDIATION EFFORTS STARTING IN EARNEST

REF: A. BANGKOK 841 (ABHISIT ADMINISTRATION)
1B. BANGKOK 815 (THAI FM KASIT'S BURMA VISIT)
1C. BANGKOK 770 (THAI RESPONSE TO TCG)
1D. BANGKOK 721 (THAILAND'S BURMA POLICY)
1E. CHIANG MAI 37 (KNU UNDER INCREASED PRESSURE)

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CLASSIFIED BY: Alex Barrasso, Chief, Pol/Econ, CG Chiang Mai.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary and Comment

11. (C) Thailand's offer to serve as an intermediary between the Burmese regime and the Karen National Union (KNU), which have been waging low-level conflict for over 50 years, will start in earnest on April 6 with a meeting between Thai FM Kasit and top KNU leaders. According to our contact, in accordance with Kasit's meeting with Burmese PM Thein Sein during his March 22-23 visit to Burma (Refs B-D), Kasit's goal is to broker talks between the regime and the KNU "as soon as possible," without preconditions.

12. (C) Comment: The April 6 meeting demonstrates Thailand's sincerity to play a constructive role in reconciliation between the Burmese regime and the KNU. Although Kasit's willingness to mediate is no doubt motivated at least in part by a desire to strengthen Thai control over the porous, troubled border region, his personal engagement is a positive sign, as are both his and PM Abhisit's March 27-28 comments to Burmese exiles about their views on Thailand's priorities for Burma (para 5 below). We will stay in touch with KNU and other exile contacts to track the progress of the talks. End Summary and Comment.

Exiles Meet Thai Ministers, Broker Talks

13. (C) According to the NLDLA's (National League for Democracy Liberated Areas) Nyo Myint, who met both PM Abhisit and FM Kasit at the March 27 Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD -- Ref A), FM Kasit will meet two of the KNU's top three leaders on April 6. Nyo Myint emphasized that he was sharing this

information with us at the request of the KNU's Vice Chairman, who was unable to travel to Chiang Mai himself. According to Nyo Myint, who brokered the April 6 meeting with the assistance of the NCUB's (National Council of the Union of Burma -- an umbrella organization of Burmese exile groups) Maung Maung at Kasit's request, Kasit's main goal is to arrange direct talks between the Burmese regime and the KNU at the earliest possible date. These talks would take place with no preconditions in accordance with discussions between FM Kasit and PM Thein Sein during the former's March 22-23 visit to Burma (Refs B-D).

¶4. (C) On April 3, Kasit's personal assistant told Embassy Bangkok that the meeting would take place in Bangkok and be "private," with none of the MFA's "Burma team" in attendance. Also on April 3, the KNU's Intelligence Chief confirmed to the Consulate that a KNU delegation would attend the meeting, adding that the group was still determining who would represent it at the encounter.

¶5. (C) According to Nyo Myint, at the March 27 CALD event, PM Abhisit told him he wanted ASEAN to focus on two goals for Burma: the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and political prisoners; and the start of an inclusive political process. For his part, FM Kasit made extensive remarks on Burma in his opening address to the gathering. At a private March 28 follow-on meeting, Nyo Myint said Kasit emphasized his desire to expand his mediation role beyond the KNU, and to work toward genuine national reconciliation.

What About ASSK?

¶6. (C) Nyo Myint related that on March 28, Kasit told him Burmese PM Thein Sein:

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-- said the SPDC did not view Aung San Suu Kyi as an enemy; and
-- asked Kasit to "find out what she wants and needs" (though without directly offering Kasit an opportunity to meet with her).

¶7. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassies Bangkok and Rangoon.
MORROW